

[From the Eugene Register Guard, June 23, 1997]

KIRSTEN

In her graduation speech at South Eugene High School six years ago this month, Kirsten Frohnmayer said: "My family jokes that by having this serious health problem, we provide an important community service. We remind people that things in their own lives may not be as bad as they seem."

That was no joke. Following the joys and sorrows of the Frohnmayer family has been a community activity here for more than two decades. Their lives are at least more instructive than soap operas. Kirsten's own story, her cheerfully determined battle against a mysterious disease with a strange name and a lethal record, has been particularly gripping.

But not all stories have happy endings. This one is particularly sad because all of us were rooting so hard, hoping against hope. The community genuinely grieves with the Frohnmayers, as in some degree does the whole state.

At 24, mentally and spiritually Kirsten had done more living than many people twice her age. She had an immense capacity for life. Partly because of her disease, she had a keen appreciation for each day's possibilities.

Her positive outlook calls to mind the obituary editorial famed Kansas editor William Allen White wrote 76 years ago after his own 16-year-old daughter was killed in a freak riding accident: "Her humor was a continual bubble of joy. . . . No angel was Mary White, but an easy girl to live with, for she never nursed a grouch five minutes in her life."

On the list of personal tragedies to which humankind is vulnerable, the death of a child must rank at the top. It does not matter whether the child is struck by a limb while riding her horse or is worn down over many years and finally defeated by a vicious disease; the loss is tremendously hard to bear.

Hearts go out to David and Lynn Frohnmayer and to Kirsten's three remaining siblings. But we know, too, that they will manage, because they are blessed with intelligence and strength of spirit—and because they understand the wisdom of what Kirsten told her classmates at the close of her remarks in 1991:

"A final thought I'd like to share with you tonight is my belief that sometimes we should live for the day. Too often life consists of anticipation of the future or regrets about the past. But we can't change the past, and we don't know what the future will hold. So, at least some of the time, we should concentrate on the present. Whatever path you've chosen, whether you're talking about college, a job, volunteer work, or family, you're talking about life and life must be fun. Find the fun in life, for as Ferris Bueller said on his day off, 'life moves pretty fast, and if you don't stop and look around once in a while, you are going to miss it.'"

"So . . . I hope that you will remember to appreciate and protect what you have, be optimistic and constructive in the face of adversity, and stop to smell the roses. Good night and good luck."•

TAX RELIEF FOR WORKING FAMILIES

• Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, today the Senate completed action on S. 949, the Revenue Reconciliation Act of 1997, legislation implementing the tax relief provisions from the historic bipartisan balanced budget agreement. I support this legislation because it does provide

real tax relief and adheres to the balanced budget agreement, which we worked hard to achieve. American families need this tax relief and they need our continued commitment to a balanced budget.

I have listened to the concerns of many of my colleagues regarding this legislation and the benefits for working families. There is no disputing the fact that this legislation does benefit upper income families, but it also benefits working families and the tax cuts are not at the expense of vital, investment programs. I have heard a great deal about the inequities in this legislation and I supported the Daschle substitute which would have eliminated many of these inequities. But, I do think it is unfair to make the criticism without examining the entire balanced budget agreement and the tax relief adopted in 1993 for struggling, working families. The bottom line is that working families will benefit from estate tax relief, capital gains tax reductions, education investment tax credits, a per child tax credit and expanded IRAs.

Beyond taxes, my colleagues must remember that the balanced budget agreement was not only about tax relief, but it was also about helping working families by allocating additional resources for health care, education, environmental protection, and nutritional assistance. It also protected Social Security and Medicare for our Nation's senior citizens. Before weighing any inequities, let's make sure we examine the complete picture.

The balanced budget agreement, which this body adopted on June 5, 1997, calls for a significant investment in education. The agreement assumes additional Federal funding for important programs aimed at improving access to quality education for our children. I can assure my colleagues that working families will benefit from improved educational opportunities for their children. Quality education is one of the major priorities for many of the constituents that I talk to in Washington State. And again, there are education tax incentives which will help middle class working families who are facing escalating tuition and higher education costs. The Hope tax credits and the permanent extension of section 127 employer-provided educational assistance tax exemption are the kind of tax relief that my constituents have endorsed.

There is no doubt that this legislation can and should be perfected. We can work to target more relief to the middle class and I will be seeking these changes in conference. I am also hopeful we guarantee that these tax cuts do not result in an explosion in the deficit. I will not sit by and watch our deficit run out of control. When I first came to the Senate in 1993, the deficit was close to \$300 billion annually. For 1997, the Congressional Budget Office has estimated that our deficit could be as low as \$70 billion. This was not done without some pain and sacrifice. It is

imperative that we stay the course and maintain a balanced budget well after 2002.

Now that the Senate has completed action on part II of the budget agreement, I sincerely hope that every effort will be made to correct the problems with S. 947, the spending reconciliation legislation. The Medicare provisions added by the Senate Finance Committee go well beyond protecting Medicare and will jeopardize access to health care for millions of low income senior citizens. I supported a balanced budget agreement that included constraints on spending and tax relief. It is imperative that we enact both parts of the bi-partisan balanced budget agreement, and I will be making every effort to improve S. 947 in conference and I will continue to oppose efforts that seek to undermine the historic, bi-partisan balanced budget agreement.●

HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY HOLIDAY

• Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, as we prepare to celebrate America's national holiday, I would like to take a moment and pay tribute to the founders of our country. James Madison, in particular, is one of my heroes. I didn't know much about James Madison until I went to college. I went to the University of Utah and majored in political science. I became acquainted with James Madison under the direction of G. Homer Durham, who was chairman of the political science department at the University of Utah. He had a very radical notion about education. He said the most important course in the political science department was political science 1. And he said, "Since I am the department head it follows that I should teach the department's most important course." So as an 18-year-old freshman I sat at the feet of Homer Durham and learned about the Constitution and James Madison. I read the Federalist Papers and began a lifelong love affair with political theory and particularly the political theory that undergirds America starting with Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and the Constitutional Convention.

As we approach the Fourth of July holiday, I am reminded of another important item which we all cherish: the American flag. The flag of the United States is a unique symbol of national unity and represents the values of liberty, justice, and equality that make this Nation an example unmatched throughout the world. The American flag is recognized around the world as an icon of freedom, representing all that we hold dear as citizens of the United States. This preeminent symbol of our Nation has flown in every conflict where American blood has been threatened and shed, and will always deserve our unbending respect and protection.

I rise today to support a bill which protects these two sacred items: the Constitution and the American flag.